

the budget. The budget does not do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The 5 minutes under the order for the Senator from Pennsylvania has expired.

Mr. SANTORUM. I thank the chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

AN EMERGING CONSENSUS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, let me congratulate my colleague from Pennsylvania. I think it is appropriate, at this very, very historic time—and I think we all understand the next 2, 3, 4, 5 weeks may be the most important weeks that any of us ever serve in this body, or in this Congress, and they may be some of the most important weeks for the future of this country—I think it is appropriate, and I think it is important we do have a full debate.

As the Senator from Pennsylvania so eloquently said, you cannot do that, really, unless you view different options, unless both sides are willing to debate the specific facts. Therefore, I think it is appropriate that the President's budget be literally on the table and that we look at that and look at the assumptions in there and look to see whether or not that budget does what the President says, and that is balance the budget.

There are those of us on this side who do not think it does. We think it is based upon assumptions that, frankly, are very optimistic and that are not based upon reality and that the savings, so-called savings that the President achieves he achieves in that manner, a changing of the accounting rules, in a sense, or changing of the assumptions, at least. So I think it is important we debate this.

We have, I believe, made some progress in this country in the tenor of the national debate. As I travel throughout my home State of Ohio—and, I imagine, my colleague from Pennsylvania finds the same thing in Pennsylvania—we are seeing emerging a consensus about the problems that exist and a consensus that this Congress finally has to do something about these problems.

There are three areas where I think really, today, there is a consensus.

A balanced budget: The American people understand we cannot continue to do what we had been doing in the past. They understand that. So the real question in this debate is, whose budget is realistic? Whose budget will, in fact, bring about a balanced budget, as we believe ours will, by the year 2002?

The second area where there clearly is a consensus is in regard to welfare reform. We saw this on the floor a few weeks ago as we looked at the overwhelming vote. Over 80 Members of this body of 100 cast a vote in favor of the final welfare reform bill that passed. There is a consensus in this country about welfare reform.

Medicare: A year ago, I do not think there was really an understanding

about the problems that we have, that we face in regard to Medicare. Today, while there is a debate about what we should do about Medicare, I do not think there is any longer a debate about the fact that something has to be done. The Medicare commissioners have said clearly that Medicare will, in fact, be bankrupt in a short period of time unless we take some very dramatic action.

So there is consensus on these three issues. As my colleague from Pennsylvania says, it is important that we get the facts out and we debate these facts on this floor.

Let me talk for a moment, in light of this, about the bill that is going to be coming in front of us. The American people may not have heard the term "reconciliation." It is kind of an inside-the-beltway term, but it is a term that is going to be used quite often in the next several weeks. This particular bill we are going to discuss is going to be the vehicle for this Congress to bring about the changes I believe people voted for last November. This legislation is bold, it is farsighted, and it is absolutely necessary for America's future. Furthermore, it is based on sound data. It is based on facts. It is based on good budget figures.

The American people decided last November they wanted a Congress that was finally willing to put America back on track towards fiscal solvency. I believe the American people are ready for this change. In fact, I believe the message of 1994, and frankly the message of 1992, was that the American people were demanding this kind of change.

We cannot ignore the basic truth contained in the report of the bipartisan entitlement commission. That commission said, if we do not change our present course, by the year 2012, every single penny in the Federal budget will be consumed by entitlements and interest on the national debt.

Mr. President, I ask consent to speak for 1 additional minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DEWINE. If, in the year 2012, we want Government to have any money for discretionary spending—money to run the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or the WIC program—it would then mean a tax increase, because there would not be any money left, no money left at all, if we continue to do what we have been doing.

In the days ahead, I intend to continue to talk about this issue, to talk about the need for this reconciliation bill.

At this point, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I listened with interest to this morning's discussion. I would say to my friend from Pennsylvania, I do not support

the budget plan the President sent to the Congress. I did not think it was a good budget when he sent it back in February. I do not support it now.

But I would say the budget that is coming, the reconciliation bill that is coming to the floor, is substantially worse than the proposal the President offered, even though I do not support the proposal of the President. We could have a vote on a proposal here in the Senate that does make some sense, that does balance the budget in the right way, that does not attack the Social Security trust funds. It can be done the right way, but the proposals here we are debating, in my judgment, steer this country in a direction that is not healthy.

The Senator from Nebraska a few minutes ago talked about the proposal that says to a lot of working families we are going to increase your taxes. And that is what this proposal will do.

Yesterday, the Treasury Department released an analysis indicating that about 50 percent of the families will find increased taxes as a result of this proposal. Then it says, if you are wealthy enough to get your income from stocks and bonds, you will get a tax cut. It will be beneficial to you. There is a beneficial approach for you. And the Senator from Nebraska says that is not what Members said they wanted.

Is it unusual for people to be skeptical when 97 percent of the members of a political party voted against the Medicare program saying, We do not want it, we do not think it is necessary, we do not support it, and then they now later say, "We are the ones that are going to save it." And people are skeptical about that? I think they have a right to be skeptical.

That is what the debate is about, the priorities. I do not think we ought to talk about a tax cut at this point this year. I think what we ought to do is balance the budget, do it the right way, and then when we have done that job figure out what we should do about the taxes. But some people here want to take the popular things first, and say, Let us serve the dessert first; that is, wait and serve dinner.

I watched with some interest earlier this week people who have been in Congress for 30, 35, 25, or 20 years come to the floor of the Chamber and cast their vote saying they would like to have term limits, and what is wrong with our country is that there are not term limits. Somebody who has been here for 30 years now votes for term limits, and says the problem with America is we did not have a limit of 12 years on their term. What are they telling the American people—stop me before I run again?

It is interesting to me that people say this is about changes and reform. In many respects, it is the business-as-usual crowd. Although the priorities are changing, the way they see it, the rich have too little, the poor have too much, and we are going to change that